

Message Text

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ACTION EB-08

INFO OCT-01 AF-10 EUR-12 ISO-00 GSA-02 ACDA-12 AGRE-00
AID-05 CEA-01 CEQ-01 CG-00 CIAE-00 COME-00
DLOS-09 DODE-00 DOTE-00 EPA-01 SOE-02 DOE-15
FMC-01 TRSE-00 H-01 INR-10 INT-05 IO-13 JUSE-00
L-03 NSAE-00 NSC-05 NSF-01 OES-07 OMB-01 PA-01
PM-05 SP-02 SS-15 ICA-11 /160 W
-----072042 110148Z /14

R 101723Z APR 78
FM AMEMBASSY BRUSSELS
TO SECSTATE WASHDC 5932
INFO AMEMBASSY KINSHASA

LIMITED OFFICIAL USE BRUSSELS 06940

E.O. 11652: NA
TAGS: EMIN CG BE US
SUBJ: BELGIAN ULTRA FINE COBALT POWER INVESTMENT
IN THE U.S.

REF: (A) STATE 88740, (B) BRUSSELS 2618

1. WE HAVE DISCUSSED THE CURRENT STATUS OF THE ULTRA
FINE COBALT PLANT TO BE BUILT IN THE U.S. BY SOCIETE
GENERALE DES MINERAIS (SGM) AND METALLURGIE HOBOKEN-
OVERPELT WITH HOBOKEN'S TECHNICAL DIRECTOR ALFRED BLONDEL.

2. BLONDEL SAID THAT THE SITUATION REMAINS BASICALLY AS
REPORTED REFTEL (B). HOBOKEN IS STILL HOLDING OPTIONS ON
TWO PROPERTIES, ONE IN NORTH CAROLINA AND ONE IN SOUTH
CAROLINA PENDING THE RESULTS OF APPLICATIONS FOR ENVIRON-
MENTAL PERMITS AT BOTH SITES. HOBOKEN HAS NOW CONTRACTED
FOR INITIAL ENGINEERING WORK ON THE PLANT LAY-OUT AND
STILL HOPES TO BE ABLE TO SELECT ITS SITE AND COMMENCE
CONSTRUCTION BEFORE THE END OF 1978.

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3. THE GOVERNOR OF NORTH CAROLINA, NOW TRAVELLING IN
EUROPE, WILL BRIEFLY VISIT HOBOKEN APRIL 14 TO DISCUSS
THE INVESTMENT WITH BLONDEL AND HIS COLLEAGUES.

4. WITH REGARD TO USE OF COBALT FROM SEABED NODULES,
BLONDEL SAID THAT HOBOKEN DOES NOT EXCLUDE THE POSSIBILITY

--ITS PROSPECTIVE ZAIRE PARTICIPATION NOTWITHSTANDING, THE U.S. PLANT WILL BE FREE TO BUY ITS COBALT FROM ANY SOURCE, AS LONG AS IT IS OF A QUALITY ACCEPTABLE FOR THE PRODUCTION OF ULTRA FINE POWER. HE STRESSED HOWEVER (AS HAVE SGM OFFICIALS IN THE PAST) THAT THE UNION MINIERE AND HOBOKEN/SGM INVESTMENTS ARE ENTIRELY INDEPENDENT OF EACH OTHER. BLONDEL ALSO GAVE HIS PERSONAL OPINION THAT NODULE-DERIVED COBALT WILL NOT BE PRODUCED IN SIGNIFICANT QUANTITIES UNTIL AT LEAST 1985.

5. UNION MINIERE, HOBOKEN, AND SGM ARE ALL OWNED AND CONTROLLED, DIRECTLY OR INDIRECTLY, BY THE LARGE BELGIAN HOLDING COMPANY SOCIETE GENERALE. AS SISTER COMPANIES WITH INTERLOCKING DIRECTORATES, WE ASSUME THAT THEIR INVESTMENTS AND ACTIVITIES ARE GENERALLY COORDINATED. FOR ADDITIONAL INFORMATION ON THESE COMPANIES, SEE 77 BRUSSELS 13454, 76 BRUSSELS A-63 AND EMBASSY WTDRS ON HOBOKEN (1974) AND UNION MINIERE (1971), BOTH BEING UPDATED. CHAMBERS

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Message Attributes

Automatic Decaptioning: X
Capture Date: 01 jan 1994
Channel Indicators: n/a
Current Classification: UNCLASSIFIED
Concepts: COBALT, CONSTRUCTION, INVESTMENTS, INDUSTRIAL PLANTS
Control Number: n/a
Copy: SINGLE
Draft Date: 10 apr 1978
Decaption Date: 01 jan 1960
Decaption Note:
Disposition Action: RELEASED
Disposition Approved on Date:
Disposition Case Number: n/a
Disposition Comment: 25 YEAR REVIEW
Disposition Date: 20 Mar 2014
Disposition Event:
Disposition History: n/a
Disposition Reason:
Disposition Remarks:
Document Number: 1978BRUSSE06940
Document Source: CORE
Document Unique ID: 00
Drafter: n/a
Enclosure: n/a
Executive Order: N/A
Errors: N/A
Expiration:
Film Number: D780154-1060
Format: TEL
From: BRUSSELS
Handling Restrictions: n/a
Image Path:
ISecure: 1
Legacy Key: link1978/newtext/t19780476/aaaacmfw.tel
Line Count: 81
Litigation Code IDs:
Litigation Codes:
Litigation History:
Locator: TEXT ON-LINE, ON MICROFILM
Message ID: 0b9caab3-c288-dd11-92da-001cc4696bcc
Office: ACTION EB
Original Classification: LIMITED OFFICIAL USE
Original Handling Restrictions: n/a
Original Previous Classification: n/a
Original Previous Handling Restrictions: n/a
Page Count: 2
Previous Channel Indicators: n/a
Previous Classification: LIMITED OFFICIAL USE
Previous Handling Restrictions: n/a
Reference: 78 STATE 88740, 78 BRUSSELS 2618
Retention: 0
Review Action: RELEASED, APPROVED
Review Content Flags:
Review Date: 26 apr 2005
Review Event:
Review Exemptions: n/a
Review Media Identifier:
Review Release Date: n/a
Review Release Event: n/a
Review Transfer Date:
Review Withdrawn Fields: n/a
SAS ID: 3024797
Secure: OPEN
Status: NATIVE
Subject: BELGIAN ULTRA FINE COBALT POWER INVESTMENT IN THE U.S.
TAGS: EMIN, CG, BE, US, SOCIETE GENERALE DES MINERAIS, METALLURGIE HOBOKENOVERPELT
To: STATE
Type: TE
vdkgvwkey: odbc://SAS/SAS.dbo.SAS_Docs/0b9caab3-c288-dd11-92da-001cc4696bcc
Review Markings:
Sheryl P. Walter
Declassified/Released
US Department of State
EO Systematic Review
20 Mar 2014
Markings: Sheryl P. Walter Declassified/Released US Department of State EO Systematic Review 20 Mar 2014